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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

Seventh session
Bangkok, 5-8 September 2017

Report of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific recommends that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) endorse the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/L.4).

II. Proceedings

A. Ministerial dialogue: "Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region"
(Agenda item 13)

2. The Ministerial Conference had before it the information document entitled "Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region" (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/INF/1-UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/INF/2).

3. The Ministerial Conference benefited from a ministerial panel on measures towards achieving a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region. The panel was moderated by Mr. Ashok Khosla, former Chair of the International Resource Panel. The panel comprised Mr. Masagos Zulkifli, Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, Singapore; Mr. Yeshey Dorji, Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan; Mr. Alexander Teabo, Minister of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development, Kiribati; Mr. Ohn Winn, Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar; Mr. Gani Sadibekov, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Energy, Kazakhstan; the Executive Secretary of ESCAP; and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

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4. During the panel discussion, the usefulness was stressed of interministerial dialogue and cooperation with a view to mainstreaming environmental sustainability into national, subnational and local development plans. At the same time, social well-being and ecological protection should be recognized as overarching guiding principles of the planning exercise. The importance of establishing national institutions to foresee and assess the impact of the use of technologies for development, as well as to inform and mediate national policy decisions aimed at improving environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social well-being, was underlined. The panellists recognized the role of ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating regional cooperation and the exchange of best practices and experience on promoting a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region.

5. The panellists shared national policy perspectives on enhancing the efficiency of resource use in economic growth processes and minimizing the negative social and ecological impacts of urbanization and economic growth. During the discussion, the necessity of strong political will and national vision to the development, implementation, monitoring and strengthening of policies, incentives and regulatory frameworks aimed at enabling the transition towards more efficient resource use was recognized. Such strong political will was also useful for protecting natural resources, minimizing waste and plastic pollution, enhancing the use of clean energy technologies, and promoting energy conservation while deploying clean transport solutions. The importance of enhancing public awareness, participation and partnerships towards resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable practices such as the "3Rs" approach (reduction, reuse and recycling) was also emphasized.

B. Matters pertaining to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) Policy perspectives on the environment and development in Asia and the Pacific

(Agenda item 14 (a))

6. The Ministerial Conference had before it the note by the secretariat entitled "Sustainable management of natural resources in Asia and the Pacific: trends, challenges and opportunities in resource efficiency and policy perspectives" (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/2).

7. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Afghanistan; Armenia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

8. Representatives of the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization made statements.

9. A representative of the Economic Cooperation Organization made a statement.

10. Representatives of the following major groups and other stakeholders made statements: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact; and Karnali Integrated Development Centre.

11. The Ministerial Conference called for action towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region.

12. The Ministerial Conference expressed its commitment, taking into account national priorities and circumstances, to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to a vision for the future that included a pollution-free planet and a resource-efficient and environmentally friendly region, and to good governance. One country representative recalled the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Strategic policy objectives that could contribute to shaping a resource-efficient and pollution-free future included the promotion of low-carbon development, green economy and green growth, the 3Rs approach, sustainable consumption and production, and the right to a clean and healthy environment.

13. The Ministerial Conference identified several challenges to the transition towards resource-efficient, pollution-free and sustainable development. Several country representatives noted that the Asia-Pacific region's rapid economic growth had come at the cost of resource depletion, environmental degradation and increased pollution. The Ministerial Conference underlined climate change as a major threat and highlighted challenges such as air, freshwater and marine pollution, and sand and dust storms.

14. The Ministerial Conference took the view that appropriate policy and institutional capacity-building was essential at all levels of government, especially for local authorities. One country representative emphasized that economic valuation of natural resources was a useful input for planning processes. Some country representatives recognized the importance of involving all stakeholders, including local communities, civil society and the private sector, and highlighted the role of traditional knowledge. There was recognition of the importance of public awareness and education, and of the need for strengthening of technology transfer.

15. Several countries had set ambitious targets that would support action on resource efficiency, including for renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks were being implemented in some countries, including on waste and air and water quality. Several country representatives reported challenges with respect to policy implementation and the establishment of baseline data and suggested the creation of shared data repositories.

16. Country representatives cited good practices with regard to sustainable resource management, including organic farming and the reduction of pesticide use in agriculture, the production of energy from renewable sources such as solar power and hydropower, the use of electric vehicles, technologies and infrastructures for the management of water and wastewater, the management of industrial and solid waste, and combating illegal deforestation. Poverty reduction, access to decent work, food security and public health were highlighted by some country representatives as co-benefits of sustainable resource management.

17. Regional cooperation was seen as a means of supporting environmentally friendly growth in the region. Some country representatives shared information about their regional cooperation efforts, including international capacity-building on a sustainable community model based on the application of the "sufficiency economy" philosophy, the Astana Green Bridge Initiative and the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth.

18. The Ministerial Conference noted the important role of ESCAP and other United Nations entities in supporting the efforts of countries in Asia and the Pacific towards the sustainable management of natural resources. Areas of support requested included promotion of the 2030 Agenda and its translation into viable action plans for the region, development of partnerships, access to appropriate funding, and building capacity in various areas.

19. The Ministerial Conference expressed appreciation for the joint action between ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme in organizing the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment, and eagerly awaited continued partnership between them.

20. Several representatives of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and other stakeholders made statements. One representative underlined the need to consider a paradigm shift, focusing on synergy impacts, enhancing regional concerted actions to identify common applicable approaches on climate change and mobilizing resources for action related to adaptation and mitigation. Another representative underlined that attention to policy coherence and interlinkages could accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasized the economic, social and environmental benefits of a just transition to decent work. The *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* were highlighted as a valuable resource for transformative action. Another representative reaffirmed the necessity of regional cooperation to address pollution, and mentioned his organization's efforts to support small island developing States and least developed countries in coping with the impacts of climate change on health and health systems.

21. The representative of indigenous peoples recommended social and environmental impact assessments, measures for free prior and informed consent, incentives for resource-efficient agriculture and recognition of shifting cultivation as a sustainable agricultural practice, among other actions. It was observed that public-private partnerships required transparency and accountability to prevent adverse impacts on natural resources; indigenous people stood ready for partnership for more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. The representative of youth and children emphasized transformation through investment in youth to harness their energy, innovation and ideas, removing constraints and barriers to opportunities. Official development assistance commitments should be met, and 6 per cent of gross domestic product should be invested in education, as recommended by the Dhaka Declaration on cooperation on the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

(b) Consideration of the report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific
(Agenda item 14 (b))

22. The Ministerial Conference had before it the report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/4) and the draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/L.4).

23. The Ministerial Conference endorsed the recommendation contained in the report of the senior officials to adopt the text of the draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific.

(c) Other matters
(Agenda item 14 (c))

24. No statements were made under the present sub-item.

C. Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific and of the report of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific
(Agenda item 17)

25. The Ministerial Conference adopted the text of the draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/L.4).

26. The Ministerial Conference adopted the present report on 8 September 2017.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the Conference

27. The seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok from 5 to 8 September 2017. The Ministerial Conference comprised two segments: the senior officials segment (5 and 6 September 2017) and the ministerial segment (7 and 8 September 2017).

28. The ministerial segment was opened by Mr. Ohn Winn, Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar. General Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand; the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme made statements.

B. Attendance

29. The Ministerial Conference was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

30. Representatives of the following Permanent Observers to ESCAP and observers attended: Brazil; Canada; Germany; Hungary; Israel; Norway; Peru; Romania; Sweden; and Switzerland.

31. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Labour Organization; International Monetary Fund; International Organization for Migration; International Telecommunication Union; secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations Office for Project Services; United

Nations University-International Institute for Global Health; and World Health Organization.

32. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended: ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity; Asian Development Bank; Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Delegation of the European Union to Thailand; Economic Cooperation Organization; Global Green Growth Institute; International Union for Conservation of Nature; Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training in Nuclear Science and Technology for the Asia and Pacific Region; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

33. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society and other entities attended: Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group); Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact; Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Asia Pacific Research Network; Central Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies; Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society; Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment; Chulalongkorn University; Clean Air Asia; Community Care for Emergency Response and Rehabilitation; Community Science Centre; Development Alternatives; Ecoforum of NGOs of Uzbekistan; Environment and Social Development Organization; Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal; Federation of Free Workers – International Trade Union Confederation; German Agency for International Cooperation; Global Call to Action against Poverty Youth – South-East, North and Central Asia and the Pacific; Grameen Shakti; Green Movement of Sri Lanka Inc.; India Centre for Public Policy; Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (Tebtebba Foundation); Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand; Institute for Global Environmental Strategies; Institute for the Future; Integrated Rural Development Centre; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; Island Sustainability Alliance CIS Inc.; Kapaeeng Foundation; Karnali Integrated Development Centre; Local Environment Development and Agricultural Research Society; Mahila Dakshata Samiti/WOMEN 2030; Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific; Radanar Ayar Rural Development Association; Roots for Equity; Semesta Hijau-Dompet Dhuafa; Serikat Nelayan Indonesia; Sindh Community Foundation; Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific; Special Talent Exchange Programme; Stockholm Environment Institute; Tarumitra; and Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management.

C. Election of officers

34. The Conference elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Masagos Zulkifli (Singapore)
Vice-Chairs:	Mr.Yeshey Dorji (Bhutan) Ms. Lorna Eden (Fiji)

D. Agenda

35. The Conference adopted the following agenda:

A. Senior officials segment (5 and 6 September 2017)

1. Opening of the senior officials segment of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific:

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

2. Review of implementation of:

   (a) Recommendations of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (2010);

   (b) Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2011-2015;

   (c) Astana Green Bridge Initiative;

   (d) Seoul Initiative on Green Growth.

3. Policy perspectives towards a resource-efficient Asia-Pacific region.

4. Draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific.

5. Other matters.

6. Opening of the senior officials segment of the second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific):[1]

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

7. Review of implementation in Asia and the Pacific of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in 2016, and discussion of regional priorities for the United Nations Environment Programme in Asia and the Pacific.

[1] The geographical coverage of the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific includes: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Zealand; Niue; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

8. Regional input to outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (2017):

   (a) Theme: "Towards a pollution-free planet";

   (b) Draft resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session;

   (c) Draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session.

9. Discussion regarding institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.

10. Adoption of the draft outcomes of the second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).[1]

11. Adoption of the report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.

B. Ministerial segment (7 and 8 September 2017)

12. Opening of the session:

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

13. Ministerial dialogue: "Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region".

14. Matters pertaining to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

   (a) Policy perspectives on the environment and development in Asia and the Pacific;

   (b) Consideration of the report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific;

   (c) Other matters.

15. Matters pertaining to the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific):[1]

   (a) Review of the first United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific and recommendations of the second Forum;

(b) Regional input to the draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (2017);

(c) Policy perspectives on a pollution-free planet.

16. Adoption of the outcomes of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).[1]

17. Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific and of the report of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.

18. Closing of the Summit.

E. Other events

36. The following seminar, side events and special sessions were held in conjunction with the Ministerial Conference:

(a) 5 September 2017: A common path: how does the Paris Agreement promote the goal of a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region? co-hosted by the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies Regional Collaboration Centre – Bangkok;

(b) 6 September 2017: Astana Green Bridge Initiative: towards interregional partnerships for sustainable development, co-hosted by the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan, and the Coalition for Green Economy and Development "G-Global";

(c) 6 September 2017: Is the Asia-Pacific region ready for climate geoengineering? hosted by the Carnegie Climate Geoengineering Governance Initiative;

(d) 7 September 2017: Impactful investments in water efficient infrastructures: inputs to the third Asia-Pacific Water Summit, co-hosted by the Japan Water Agency, Network of Asian River Basin Organizations, the Government of Myanmar, Asia-Pacific Water Forum and ESCAP;

(e) 7 September 2017: Solutions towards an air pollution-free planet, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme;

(f) 7 September 2017: Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme;

(g) 8 September 2017: Towards a resource-efficient Asia-Pacific region through the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth, co-hosted by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, the Korea Environment Corporation and ESCAP;

(h) 8 September 2017: Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development, organized by ESCAP;

(i) 8 September 2017: Strengthening regional ocean governance and partnerships towards clean seas, co-hosted by ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Annex

List of documents

Symbol	*Title*	*Agenda item*
General series		
E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/1	Progress in the implementation of the recommendations and endorsed initiatives of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific	2 (a), (b), (c) and (d)
E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/2	Sustainable management of natural resources in Asia and the Pacific: trends, challenges and opportunities in resource efficiency and policy perspectives	3 and 14 (a)
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E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/6	Report of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific	
Limited series		
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E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/INF/1	Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region	13
E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/INF/2	Brief country progress report on the implementation of the Astana Green Bridge Initiative and the Green Bridge Partnership Programme over the period 2010-2017	2 (c)
Conference room paper series		
E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/CRP.1	Draft report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific	11
Working paper series		
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Information available online		
www.unescap.org/MCED/7/infoNote	Information for participants	
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www.unescap.org/MCED/7/timetable	Tentative programme	

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